

## **WATER RESOURCES PLANNING PROGRAM (1991-2004)**

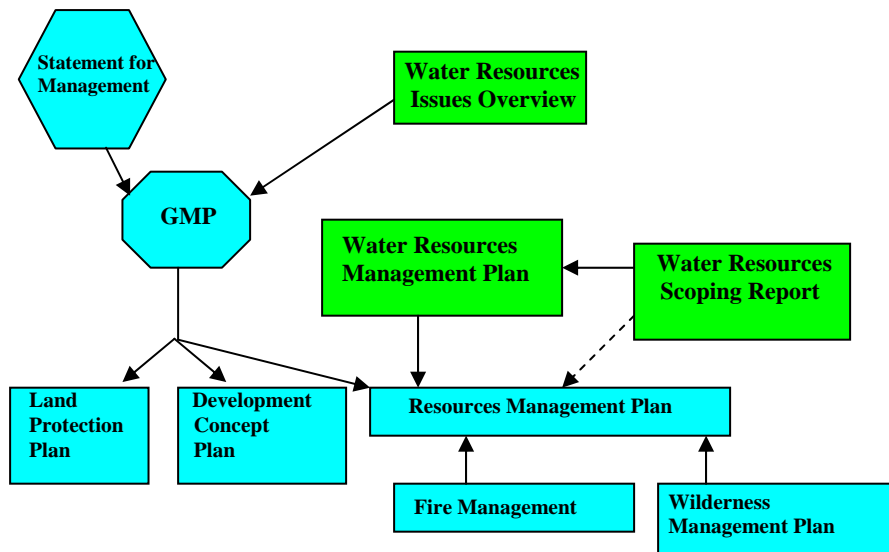
The water resource planning process and its products were designed to integrate into the overall park planning framework. From 1991 to 2004, general park planning was guided by two frameworks (Figure 1A and B). Director's Order 2: Park Planning (DO-2) was issued in May 1998, amending the NPS *Management Policies* then in effect and delegated authority to the Associate Director to issue program standards. The policies described in DO-2 were subsequently incorporated directly into the 2001 NPS *Management Policies* and the DO sunsetted in May 2002.

Revisions to the park planning process in 1998 were in response to requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act, as well as to accommodate the why/what/how logical framework. This why/what/how logic helps park managers and staffs stay focused on the park's purpose and desired conditions when making decisions about specific management activities. No matter which overall park planning framework was in effect, our products continued to assist two primary planning areas – general management planning and resource management planning.

The *Water Resource Issues Overview* was designed to support other, ongoing planning efforts such as the development of *General Management Plans*, and secondarily, *Resources Management Plans*. It was not an implementation plan but a planning assistance document. It provided a preliminary identification of major water resource issues and management concerns, and as such was a quick response document requiring a minimal turn-around time – 4 to 6 weeks. This combined with the fact that it was not a published document provided flexibility in responding to park planning needs.

A *Water Resources Scoping Report*, published in WRD's technical report series, typically identified and analyzed major water resource issues and management concerns; summarized existing hydrological information; and, determined if a park unit warranted the preparation of a *Water Resources Management Plan* (see below). For the latter, development of a *Water Resources Management Plan* occurred when the water resource issues facing a park were too numerous and/or too complex – otherwise the Scoping Report became a stand-alone document important in strategy building. As designed, it was primarily a precursor to the *Water Resources Management Plan*, and was not considered an implementation plan; however, as a stand alone document, it might have contained implementable management actions. *Water Resources Scoping Reports* required approximately 6 to 12 months to complete.

## A. Pre-1998



## B. 1998-2004

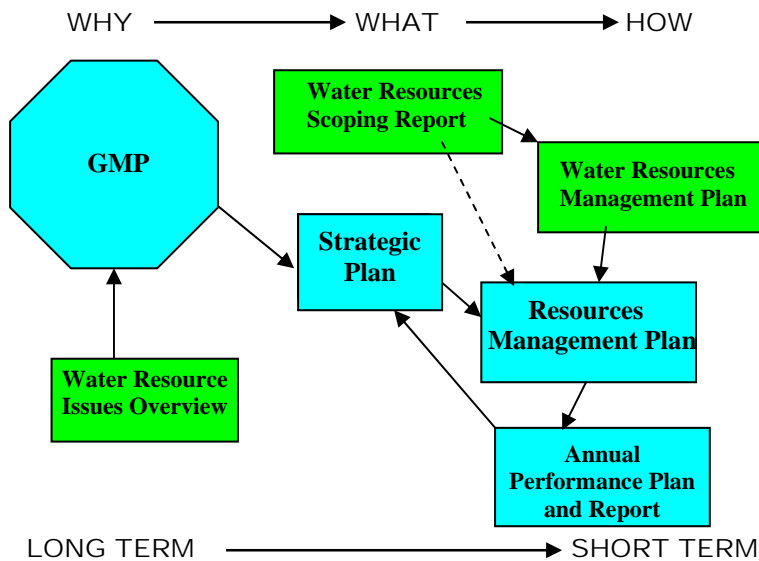


Figure 1. **A.** A flow chart of the NPS planning framework (blue boxes) as it existed from 1991-1998. WRD planning products are in green. Items in the first row below the GMP are program plans, which are components of implementation planning. Those plans in the bottom row are considered resource-specific implementation plans that would eventually become part of the *Resources Management Plan*. **B.** A flow chart of the NPS planning framework (blue boxes) as defined in DO 2 (1998). WRD planning products are in green.

The *Water Resources Management Plan* was an implementation plan that defined a programmatic approach for addressing complex water-related issues, and, as such, was the blueprint for the resolution of water resource issues over a 5 -10 year period or longer. These plans took 2 to 3 years to complete and built upon the results of *Water Resources Scoping Reports* by: 1) thoroughly analyzing water resource issues and concerns; 2) providing a detailed description of the hydrologic environment and existing water resource information and data; 3) assisting management in developing alternative actions concerning the issues; and 4) selecting a preferred course of action. That preferred course of action was through the development of project statements that proposed management actions to address the water resource issues. These project statements then became part of the *Resources Management Plan*. It was the development of this preferred course of action via project statements that separated scoping reports from management plans.

## THE 'NEW' WATER RESOURCES PLANNING PROGRAM – 2005 AND BEYOND

After several years of experience with the new policy and standards derived from the now sunsetted DO-2, the park planning program undertook a review seeking opportunities for improvement, especially in the area of resource management. This review became official with the issue in August, 2004 of replacement *Park Planning Program Standards* (Figure 2). That update is a refinement of the approach to planning standards rather than a major change in planning direction.

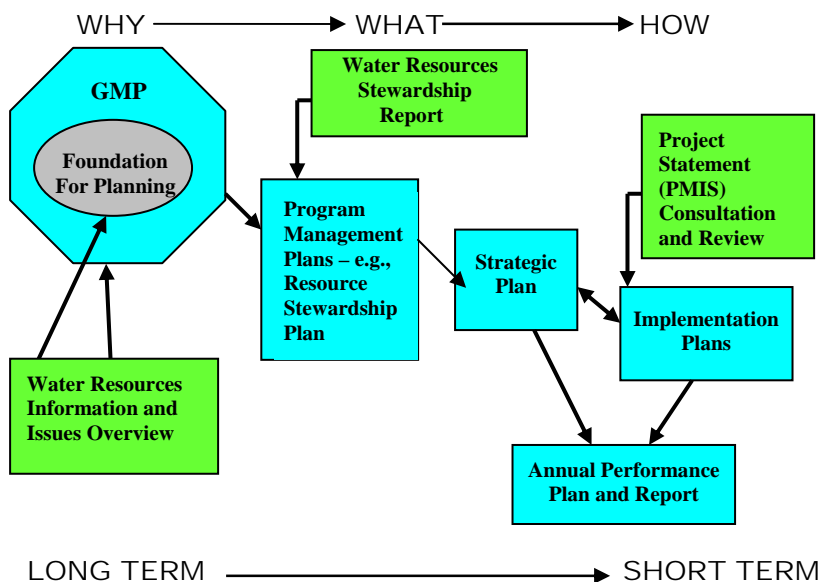


Figure 2. The “new” NPS framework for park planning and decision making as defined in the recently revised *Park Planning Program Standards* (2004; blue boxes). The green boxes represent new WRD planning products or assistance; their genesis is discussed in the text.

A logical rationale is established through several levels of planning that become increasingly detailed and complementary by agreeing first on why a park was established and what resource conditions should exist, and then increasingly focused on how those conditions should be achieved or maintained. Planning and decision making also become more detailed through time – this long-range/mid-range/short-range planning helps park managers and staffs plot and achieve incremental progress toward their ultimate goals. Within this framework, planning and decision making are accomplished through six discrete kinds of planning, resulting in six kinds of documents (Figure 2), two of which are new:

- *Foundation for Planning and Management*: The purpose of the foundation document is to define clearly the legal and policy requirements that mandate the park's basic management responsibilities, and to identify and analyze the resources and values that are fundamental to achieving the park's purpose or that are otherwise important to park planning and management. The foundation document may be developed as a separate document in advance of the GMP or as phase one of the GMP.
- *Program Management Plan*: The revised standards make a greater distinction between program planning and other kinds of implementation planning. Program Plans are now placed between GMPs and strategic plans. Park managers conduct program planning to identify and recommend strategies primarily for achieving the desired conditions in the GMP. Through program planning, parks are able to translate the qualitative statements of desired conditions established through the GMP process into measurable or objective indicators that can be monitored to assess the degree to which the desired conditions are being achieved or maintained. Based on information obtained through this analysis, comprehensive strategies are developed to achieve the desired conditions. These strategies can then be considered when the park establishes its 5-year strategic plan, the document that prioritizes and integrates the recommendations from all individual program areas. Director's Order 2.1 (*in draft*) specifically addresses the development of a *Resource Stewardship Plan*, the program plan for natural and cultural resources.

It is the requirements of these two documents that form the basis for the new water resources planning framework. We now offer a *Water Resources Information and Issues Overview* that is designed to address the needs of either the *Foundation for Planning and Management* document or phase one of the GMP (Figure 2). Its anticipated timeframe for completion is two to four months, and it will be published as part of WRD's technical report series. Elements of the *Water Resources Information and Issues Overview* document include the identification and analysis of the impact of laws, policies, regulations, and specific park mandates as they relate to water resources, and identification and analysis of those aspects of water resources (i.e., physical, chemical and biological) that warrant consideration in park planning and management. When information is

available, this latter analysis would be based on: 1) an assessment of existing water resource conditions based on the quality and comprehensiveness of existing information; 2) the importance of park water resources from both a watershed and regional perspective including their ecological, cultural and social context; 3) an interpretation of the optimum condition based on NPS management policies and a comparison to existing conditions; 4) a trend analysis if water resource conditions are changing; 5) identification of the major influences (issues) affecting trends in water resources; 6) the range of known stakeholder interests in water resources; and 7) an analysis of policy-level issues -- the potential for some or all water resources to be detrimentally affected by management decisions intended to achieve conditions consistent with the purpose of a park. This document will be flexible in its design in order to serve park needs. For example, a water resource-based park, such as a Wild and Scenic River, may have a basic need to inform stakeholders of the condition of its water resources and to identify and analyze all water resource issues that it faces. However, because of priorities, that park is years away from the start of a new GMP. With an additional effort, the *Water Resources Information and Issues Overview* could serve that need.

The *Water Resources Stewardship Report* is designed specifically to address the water resource needs in a park's *Resource Stewardship Plan* (Figure 2). That report will: 1) define the park's desired conditions from its GMP in terms of objective, measurable values for water resources or, if desired conditions are inappropriate or lacking because a GMP is not existing or dated, develop interim desired conditions with concomitant measurable values for water resources; 2) summarize existing information on water resources, and if insufficient develop strategies for its acquisition; 3) assess existing water resources in terms of measurable values in comparison with the values defined for achievement of desired conditions -- if information is incomplete or lacking quality, describe strategies for its acquisition; 4) describe trends in park water resource conditions based on available monitoring information -- if information is insufficient, develop strategies for its acquisition and analysis; 5) identify and analyze water resource management issues that are impediments to achievement and maintenance of desired conditions -- includes issues responsible for differences between existing and desired resource conditions or that may affect the achievement and maintenance of desired conditions; 6) develop long-term comprehensive resource strategies to achieve and maintain the desired resource conditions; and 7) assess the effectiveness of previous and current resource management actions in achieving or maintaining desired resource conditions and the implications for the comprehensive strategies. This document is anticipated to be completed in six to nine months, and it will be published as part of WRD's technical report series.

The *Water Resources Information and Issues Overview* and the *Water Resources Stewardship Report* may be considered renamed extensions of the original *Water Resource Issues Overview* and *Water Resources Scoping Report*,

respectively. However, there is no logical extension of the original *Water Resources Management Plan*. There are two primary reasons for this: 1) this plan was programmatic and strategic in its concept, elements now covered in the *Resource Stewardship Plan*; and, 2) given the 5-year time frame of the *Strategic Plan*, much of what the WRMP projects in the long-term may become outdated by the time priorities are sufficiently high to be addressed in the present or succeeding strategic plans. In place of the WRMP, we now offer consultation and review of PMIS water-based project statements that address the priorities of the Strategic Plan and ultimately move the park towards achieving the desired conditions.